DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 202 834 SP 018 162

AUTHOR Flarup, Tamara J.
TITLE How to Communicate Your Sports Message to the Media, Gain Rapport, and Enhance Media Coverage of Your Sport.
PUB DATE [80]
NOTE 7p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Athletic Coaches; *Athletics; *News Media; *News Reporting; Physical Recreation Programs; *Publicity; Public Relations; Radio; School Recreational Programs; Television

ABSTRACT

Suggestions are listed for athletic coaches to develop and use media contacts in television, radio, and newspapers to promote athletic programs. The main concepts are: (1) know your media contacts, and let them know that you are available for questioning; (2) know the kinds of information they want; (3) be aware of and observe deadlines; (4) show that you are a valuable news source by recognizing the types of news items that are interesting and timely; and (5) be accurate, consistent, and persistent. Pursuing media contacts may mean initiating the relationship with news personnel, including the sports editor. Ideas for increasing media interest include giving sports luncheons, open houses, and media passes to publicize sports events. Some ways to think of news items are in terms of unusual angles, accomplishments, seasonal timeliness, and visual presentation for television. A list of do's and don'ts advises promptness, care in off-the-record remarks, and points of etiquette in dealing with editors of news stories. (FG)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED202834

Tamara J. Flarup, Director
Women's Sports Information
University of Wisconsin

HOW TO COMMUNICATE YOUR SPORTS MESSAGE TO THE MEDIA, GAIN RAPPORT, AND ENHANCE MEDIA COVERAGE OF YOUR SPORT

I. Know your media contacts

A. Listen to television sports, read papers, listen to radio. Know what person represents what medium, and don't mix them up.

B. Introduce yourself via the telephone, or better yet in person. This is a big step for you to take, but they will remember it and appreciate it. They are interested in meeting news sources, and you're one of them.

1. Tell the media representatives what you coach.

2. Ask them how you can help them in getting your news to them. Ask them what they would like, and establish procedures for getting them your news. Remember once you start as a news source, there is no quitting. If they expect a call and don't get it, that means trouble for your program.

a. Phone in a special event

b. Prepare a news release

c. Tell them the hours your available for interviews, and your practice times.

d. Have the media representatives tell you their priorities in reporting sports in your area.

C. Couple this introduction with an example of your ability as a news source. Give them some newsy item that can be the first step in gaining credibility.

1. First know the types of news

a. Hard news--an event that has timely value.

1) Is the item of consequence to a reasonable number of people?
2) Will the people be interested in reading or hearing about it?

-more-

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY Tamara J. Flarup
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

SP 018 162

b. Feature News--not as timely as hard news. Usually human interest stories, personality pieces, unusual events, interpretative articles.

1) Must have human appeal--make a person sit up and say "this is interesting."
2) Reader Identification--people listening or reading should be able to identify with it.
3) Reader self-Interest--hearing it should permit the reader of listener to improve himself.

NOTE: Two important components of news are timeliness (except features) and the local nature. Don't deliver today's news tomorrow, and local newspersons thrive on local stories because that is the market for circulation or the broadcast area.

2. Know some ways to think of news

a. Angles--the reason to be published. Unusual methods or approaches which would tie into the readership of your area.

_____

b. Accomplishments--achievements of staff and students. MVP awards, all-district honors, etc.

_____

c. News pegs--features that lend themselves to hard news items. Ex: exercises that would keep you fit in a bomb shelter tying into the recent nuclear accident.

_____

d. seasonal timeliness--back to school a good time to give composite schedules and sports previews (most papers have a special sports section for back to school). If the basketball team has a pre-season dinner, make sure the girls are also included.

_____

e. interviews--talk with people related to your activity such as the bus driver, custodians, cooks, counselors for any feature item that could be interesting. Ex: what kind of things do athletes leave on a bus.

_____

f. Television--needs visual presentation. Think demonstration and action when you invite the television medium. (Ex: a gymnast who can throw the trick Olga Korbut threw in the Olympics)

_____

=-more-

3. What to do with your news

a. Send an advance--at least one week prior to the event. This is a news release, not a press release. The lead should contain the elements of who, what, when where, why, but not necessarily in that order. Format follows:

School
Date Released:
For Release: Immediately or At Will

Your Name
Your Title
Your Phone: office
home

1) Begin about 1/3 the way down with your lead
2) Use 8 1/2 x 11 white paper (prefearably school letterhead)
3) Type release double space
4) Order of details follows an inverted pyramid form: Lead, Most Important details, less important, least important

b. Phone call--sometimes just the right way to report your news in order to enhance coverage. But don't use the phone if you've forgotten to send advance notice, and it's a spur of the moment thing.

c. fact sheets--sometimes more useful than writing stories. Contains just the pertinent information, and a number for ways to follow up on the facts.

d. column--if you're an expert, volunteer a column. Particularly if you can gear your expertise to age group sports such as swimming, gymnastics, hockey, soccer. Remember the wide appeal is important.

e. fillers--a brief item of one or two paragraphs used to fill in gaps left by too short a column. Records, anniversary dates, historical tidbits work well. (Women's sports are three years old today (date)).

f. Letters to the Editor--one of the most highly read sections of the paper. Good for appreciation of coverage letters, or to set facts straight, but don't get mixed up with verbal battles in the paper. Have others write the battle letters.

g. deadlines--know and respect. weekly papers have different deadlines than dailies. Broadcast times vary with the station. Morning papers need the stuff the night before, and afternoon papers need it early in the morning. Find out the deadlines, and observe religiously.

h. Find out the best day to get your news in. Traditionally Sunday papers have features, Friday and Saturday papers are thin and tight, Mondays and Tuesdays are slow days, depending on when your municipal meetings are.

SUMMARY:
1. Let them know you
2. Know what they want
3. Observe deadlines
4. Show you're a valuable news source
5. Be accurate and consistent (and persistent)

4. Some Dos

a. Always be available to give information at any time.
b. Give the reporter your home phone number and get his. These numbers come in handy when unexpected news breaks during off-duty hours.
c. Compliment a reporter when he has done an exceptionally fine job and write a letter to his editor praising the article.
d. When a reporter isn't available at an event, a meeting, or a speech, take notes and call the newspaper immediately with the information.
e. Be sure to let newspapers know if a scheduled event has been called off.
f. When discussing news with reporters, always put facts in perspective and give as much background information as possible.
g. Always respond promptly to a reporter's inquiry. If you don't have the information available or want time to think before answering, tell the newsman you'll call him back in ten minutes. Then do so.
h. When giving a reporter an impromptu statement on the phone concerning a controversial issue, jot down what you told him. The notation will come in handy if a second reporter calls about the same issue or if you are misquoted.
i. Invite reporters in to give advice to the staff and board about the district's press relations and news coverage. They are bound to give better coverage if you follow their suggestions.
j. Put reporters and editors on advisory councils if they are willing to serve. This will give them a chance to understand some of the district's problems from the inside.
k. Remember that when talking with reporters you are always on the record--even during informal or chance meetings. Avoid casual comments or "off the record" remarks unless you specify first that they are not for publication. Be sure, though, that a reporter will accept "off the record" information before volunteering it.

5. And Some Don'ts

a. Don't expect a newspaper to publish news releases word for word. Some papers will rewrite them to conform to requirements; others will shorten them for lack of space. That's their prerogative. Some papers also will phone for additional information and add it to the story.
b. Don't complain to an editor if a news release isn't published. And never call him to ask when a story will appear.
c. Don't ask a reporter to see his story before he submits it to his paper. He'll resent the implication.
d. Don't ask a newsman for clippings or tearsheets of a story after it appears. Go to a newsstand and buy the paper or subscribe to a service that clips newspaper items for clients on a fee basis.
e. Don't ask a newspaper to return a photo except under unusual circumstances.
f. Don't try to suppress unfavorable news. Any attempt to do so usually ends up with the story receiving greater prominence.
g. Don't tell a reporter how to write his story. If you want to emphasize certain points, do so during the interview.
h. Don't assume that a reporter will be impressed with your position or title. He is used to dealing with public officials at high levels and will consider a condescending attitude a shortcoming on your part.

II. Even if you do all of the former, what happens if there is still no interest?

A. By initiating the relationship you've shown you're willing to go a step beyond the role of coach. You've also shown you know something about the news business, and have respect for the profession.

B. Understand that men's sports have been around longer than women's sports, and so have the reporters and editors. Change may not come overnight, but your persistence, accuracy and consistency can pay off. If you have a legitimate gripe you can better discuss the situation if you're on friendly terms with the news people. Ex: boys srestling got three columns in the papers, while girls basketball only got a paragraph, and the attendance was the same at both events. Depending on the significance of the wrestling event, I would discuss the coverage with the news editor. Since equal interest was shown by the attendance figures, you have a legitimate gripe. However remember, newspapers are not governed by Title IX. Also make sure the editor was notified of the girls event, and that the results were reported.

C. Look at your area and observe the news priorities to know where your sport fits in. Ex: Pro sports, UW Income sports, Boys High School, Girls High School, Area High Schools, UW Women's Sports, Madison area sports.

Know where you are in the scale, but don't forget if you have a legitimate news story you can get to the top quickly. Women's sports will not be hard news consistently for awhile yet, but features can get you great exposure. Also remember the available time and space for your news. Radio has 10 minutes twice a day, television 8 minutes twice a day, newspapers have only four or so pages.

-more-

D. Pressure

1. Don't create pressure by antagonism
2. Increased attendance will raise the media interest level--be creative in ways to increase attendance.
3. Parents and friends can be useful if their complaint is registed in the right place. Ex: AIAW Basketball televised by NBC in its entirety, except in Madison. The program director received lots of calls and letters regarding his pre-empting the basketball for Lawrence Welk.
4. Remain a friend, not an adversary. You'll lose if you lose your temper and trust, and no one will win, least of all the athlete. The media are in business to make a profit and serve the area interests, but they are obligated to no one but their owners.

III. SOME IDEAS THAT MAY WORK

A. Sports luncheons (media and fans)
B. Ticket give aways over radio
C. Call in sports show over ed. TV
D. Public Service Announcements
E. Community News calendar
F. Open Houses
G. Any former elderly sports stars, give presentation at your event
H. Flyers, Posters, Schedules
I. Find out if the media have a group that gathers weekly and attend
J. Write thank you letters, particularly to broadcast media to use in their ranking with FCC
K. Sponsor your schedule on drama tickets, music programs, etc.
L. Visit student organizations and community organizations with slide-tape and schedules
M. Athletic iron ons, bumper stickers
N. Parent's Day, Elderly Day,at games
O. Distribute media passes if you charge for your events
P. Put pocket schedules around the community and school
Q. Find advertisers for nice game programs (restaurants always good)
R. Send sports previews and include a roster on all sports to media--
S. include bio information such as the daughter of some former star
S. Have age group sports come in for special nights--they bring lots of parents with them.
T. Play pre-games to guys events, exposure is good
U. Other.....

-30-